

Contributions

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

L. L. GARBER

"The truth shall make you free."—John 8:32.

Education is beginning to receive some of the attention it deserves. Never before did the subject occupy so large a place in the world's thought. Never before did governments give it so much attention and provide so liberally for its support, or philanthropic men and organizations contribute so generously for its maintenance and endowment.

This great and growing interest has given rise to much discussion and the various phases of the subject are being considered with critical attention, patient research, and scholarly ability. New problems have arisen and new lines of investigation have been opened. One of the most interesting and important of these is the study of the development of mind from childhood to maturity. We have set ourselves the task of discovering what sort of human plant the child is. We are trying to understand what possibilities lie latent in this germ of humanity. We are endeavoring to learn how he begins to grow; what buds, leaves, petals and blossoms he puts forth first; what phosphate of truth, what dew of love, what sunshine of inspiration will develop him most certainly and rapidly into the most perfect tree of Christian manhood. We are studying also how he must be trimmed, budded, grafted and sprayed to yield the most abundant fruit for the Master's use. We have learned that the teacher-gardener who tends this bud of promise, should be an intelligent, interested, inspiring artist at his work of soul-building, for, as the plant may be nourished into a beautiful and fruitful tree, so the child may be nurtured up to a great and useful man. Likewise as a plant from improper cultivation or lack of cultivation may become a stunted, dwarfed, ungainly tree, a cumberer of the earth, bearing only bitter fruit, so the child plant from lack of proper education becomes a stunted, warped and vicious citizen, bearing the bitter fruit of selfishness, hate, drunkenness, idleness and crime. Society is burdened with this kind of human fruit, for which we Christians are largely responsible, and a part of the work and duty of all teachers, churches and philanthropists is to so improve the means and methods of education that every human plant placed in this earth-garden, may be developed into that immortal flower, a Christ-like character.

Thus it seems we are coming to a better understanding of what education means and of the best methods of securing it. But, as the topic assigned for this paper was "Christian Education," our paper will be devoted more particularly to phases of that subject.

Christian education began with Christianity and was zealously promoted by the Apostles and Church Fathers. They caught the spirit of the Master, and sought to instruct the intellect as well as the heart.

They established schools, became teachers, arranged courses of study, and by promoting educational movements, promoted the growth and perpetuity of the church. Such men as Paul, Basil the Great, Chrysostom, Origen, and Augustine served the Master not only by directly building up the church, but also by promoting education, the hand maid of the church and the chief means of its extension. Around the names of these men all educational progress of the early Christian centuries clusters. They lit the torch of Christian learning whose flame, tho feeble and flickering at first, and sometimes enveloped by the clouds of superstition, has yet been thru all the centuries a beacon light of hope and the day star of progress, guiding men's erring feet up the rugged pathway of knowledge toward the mountain tops of divine truth and transfigured Christian character. In those centuries, as now, Christianity fostered education and education in turn doubly paid the debt by fostering Christianity.

The first Christian schools were the Catachumen schools, and were established to instruct the early Christian believers in the new faith, in its literature, rites, ceremonies and doctrines. Ignorant and pagan as the people were, this instruction was a necessity for them, both before and after conversion, the schools doing a work somewhat analogous to that of the modern Sunday-school. Near the close of the second century, schools were established in which reading, writing, Psalm singing and scripture texts were taught. These were the first Christian common schools and they began a work fraught with tremendous consequences to the human race. About the same time, at Antioch, Alexandria, and other places, were established schools known as Cataphetical schools. Converted pagans and Christian teachers found it necessary to fortify themselves against unbelievers and were called upon to defend their faith against subtle philosophers and trained thinkers who had had excellent educational advantages. Accordingly Cataphetical schools were established to instruct men in the doctrines of the church and to prepare them to meet and vanquish opponents. These schools were a sort of theological training school and also instructed their students in all the learning of the time. This was the beginning of Christian higher education. As it was then necessary that the Christian teacher and believer be well educated in order to meet and overthrow error and to appeal to men of superior intelligence, so is it necessary today: there are still men of superior intelligence who need to have the claims of Christianity brought home to them: there are still subtle philosophies to be exploded: there are still vicious customs and hoary headed falsehoods to be overthrown: and new customs and institutions to be established by Christian disciples who are filled with the Christ spirit and trained in the best learning.

The spirit of Christianity makes the pro-

motion of education natural, necessary, obligatory. Wherever Christianity has gone, there has gone also the desire for universal and higher education. Wherever has gone the missionary, has gone also the mission school, the common school, the Christian college; and along with these come the multiplication of literatures, arts and sciences, and the advancement of civilization. Along with his conversion, the Christian experiences a certain illumination of spirit and expansion of mind, which craves a larger knowledge of the things of God. He wants to know God thru his Word, and becomes a student of language; he wants to know what great men have thought about God, and his world, and he studies literature; he would learn how men have lived, striven, failed, succeeded and made the world what it is, and he becomes a student of history; he would know how God has spoken to men in the world of things,—in the blossom, the flower, the bird-song, in the mountain, the rain drop, and the starry heavens, and he becomes a student of nature. Aflame with the spirit of love, the Christian desires that all men may share the same intellectual and spiritual riches that have blest his life and freed him from the bondage of ignorance, error and sin, and accordingly becomes an enthusiastic promoter of education, establishes schools, endows colleges, and first of all sees that his own children are not deprived of this priceless blessing, to deny which, is a crime against the youth and against society. This same spirit of love promotes education for another reason. The Christian seeing that education is power, secures the best education possible that he may be the most helpful and useful to humanity. He desires also that others may receive the same equipment so that they too may best promote the cause of Christ and the progressive realization of his kingdom among men.

As Christianity gave education a new inspiration, so it gave it also a new aim and ideal. The Chinese educate for present needs only; aiming to prevent progress and keep things as they are by teaching a reverence for the past. In India education is for the classes, teaching self-repression, and producing a dreamy, self-satisfied, non-progressive people. The ancient Egyptians educated the higher classes who were the rulers. Spartan education was mainly physical, the aim being to produce invincible warriors. That of Rome, practical, preparing the classes to hold office and acquire wealth. The Athenian Greeks rose to a high conception of education. Recognizing the value of the individual as no other people had done, they strove to educate the entire man, giving him beauty of form, keenness of intellect and nobleness of heart. It remained, however, for the Great Teacher, Jesus of Nazareth to establish principles for a true education,—an education which should prepare not for this life only, but for all life; not alone for the rich, the powerful, or the classes, but for all men; not alone for the